PITTA

Newsletter of Deccan Birders (formerly Birdwatchers' Society of Andhra Pradesh)
New Series Volume 19 Number 13 November 2022

FIELD TRIP-1: Sunday, 13th November 2022: Mominpet. Meeting Point-1: NMDC, Masab Tank, 5.00AM; Meeting Point-2: Taramati Baradari main entrance, 5.20AM. Trip Coordinator(s): Srikanth B (Mobile: 9738840070), Gokul Krishna Addanki (Mobile: 9945346585)

Mominpet is a mixed forest with Shrubs, Grasslands and a lake which has our regular winter visitors coming there some of the keys birds to look out for Harriers, Eagles, Black-headed Cuckooshrike, Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse, Tree Pipit, Rain Quail, Jungle Bush-Quail, Rock Bush-Quail, Barred Buttonquail, Painted Francolin, Baya Weaver etc.

This will be a half-day trip. Carry water and breakfast/snacks, and rain gear if required. Strict Covid protocols will be followed, so please ensure you wear masks, carry a sanitiser and maintain social distancing. Non-members are most welcome; however, they are requested to contribute Rs. 100/- per person to the Deccan Birders kitty. Deccan Birders T-Shirts and caps will be available for sale.

Trip Report: Meezuru, Andhra Pradesh, March 06, 2022

Text & Photos: Sita Susarla

Mixed flock of shorebirds at Meezuru

The village of Meezuru in Tirupati district of Andhra Pradesh is situated on the North-western side of the Pulicat Lake. It is about 120km from Tirupati town and houses a major portion of the Pulicat Lagoon.

On the advice of some students of IISER Tirupati who are avid birders, we travelled to this village via the Abaka-Karikadu road. It is a vast birding habitat for raptors, land birds as well as waders. We travelled nearly 10km on this road that goes to Meezuru. The village is a fairly large area on the map and includes a lagoon as well as agricultural fields with human habitation at the far end of the road.

We stopped at several places along the way to observe bird activity. The first birds we saw were the Blue-tailed Bee-eaters, Jerdon's Bushlarks, Ashy-crowned Sparrow Larks, Indian Silverbills, Scaly-breasted Munias, Indian Roller, White-breasted Kingfisher, Red Collared Dove and Purple-rumped Sunbirds.

White-eyed Buzzard

As we drove further, we saw several raptors including two White-eyed Buzzards, one Short-toed Snake Eagle and a Marsh Harrier. We were amazed to see that the lagoon point was jam-packed with birds.

Short-toed Snake Eagle

Greater Flamingos lining the far shore of the water

The surprising sighting was a long stand of Greater Flamingos. There were hundreds of them standing in two to three rows foraging in the brackish waters alongside large flocks of Pied Avocets, Ruffs, Northern Shovelers, Little and Temminck's Stints, and Little and Great Cormorants.

Pied Avocet

There were scattered flocks of Eurasian Spoonbills, Asian Openbills, Grey Herons, and Great, Intermediate and Little Egrets. There were also three Western Reef Egrets and around six Spot-billed Pelicans that we saw from close quarters. There may have been more, farther away.

Little Egret & Western Reef Egret

Spot-billed Pelican

Flying above this ground spectacle were many Whiskered, Common and Gull-billed Terns. The brackish waters driven by the tides of the sea probably brought in lots of food for these birds.

Whiskered Terns in flight

We spent a couple of hours here trying to spot all the birds in the lagoon. After a brief lunch we travelled further on the Karikadu road that passed through the lagoon, stopping now and then to capture pictures of some fantastic views of the lagoon.

Ruff, Marsh Sandpiper & Northern Shoveler

At one point we saw hundreds of waders very close to the road. It was a mixed assortment of Common Sandpipers, Marsh Sandpipers, Little Stints and Ruffs.

As we looked at the birds, adding more species to our count, a large murmuration of shore birds came into our view. It was only 3:30PM, probably two hours to sunset, and we thought it was too early for murmurations. We were just looking at it when more murmurations began to fill the sky. It was a wonderful sight to watch so many flocks of birds. The last time we saw such murmurations were that of Rosy Starlings and Rose-ringed Parakeets at Lakhota Lake at Jamnagar, Gujarat.

That was Meezuru, the wonderland of birds. Even though there were no lifers it was a rich birding experience, especially the Flamingo stand.

Whiskered Terns along with assorted ducks and waders

The full list of birds seen during the trip is given below:

Sl No	Common Name	Scientific Name	Sl No	Common Name	Scientific Name
1	Garganey	*Spatula querquedula*	31	Western Reef Egret	*Egretta gularis*
2	Northern Shoveler	*Spatula clypeata*	32	Indian Pond Heron	*Ardeola grayii*
3	Indian Spot-billed Duck	*Anas poecilorhyncha*	33	Glossy Ibis	*Plegadis falcinellus*
4	Grey Francolin	*Francolinus pondicerianus*	34	Black-headed Ibis	*Threskiornis melanocephalus*
5	Greater Flamingo	*Phoenicopterus roseus*	35	Eurasian Spoonbill	*Platalea leucorodia*
6	Little Grebe	*Tachybaptus ruficollis*	36	Short-toed Snake Eagle	*Circaetus gallicus*
7	Rock Pigeon	*Columba livia*	37	White-eyed Buzzard	*Butastur teesa*
8	Red Collared Dove	*Streptopelia tranquebarica*	38	Eurasian Marsh Harrier	*Circus aeruginosus*
9	Laughing Dove	*Streptopelia senegalensis*	39	Common Kingfisher	*Alcedo atthis*
10	Asian Palm Swift	*Cypsiurus balasiensis*	40	White-throated kingfisher	*Halcyon smyrnensis*
11	Eurasian Moorhen	*Gallinula chloropus*	41	Green Bee-eater	*Merops orientalis*
12	Black-winged Stilt	*Himantopus himantopus*	42	Indian Roller	*Coracias benghalensis*
13	Pied Avocet	*Recurvirostra avosetta*	43	Ashy Woodswallow	*Artamus fuscus*
14	Red-wattled Lapwing	*Vanellus indicus*	44	Black Drongo	*Dicrurus macrocercus*
15	Ruff	*Philomachus pugnax*	45	House Crow	*Corvus splendens*
16	Temminck's Stint	*Calidris temminclii*	46	Ashy-crowned Sparrow Lark	*Eremopterix griseus*
17	Little Stint	*Calidris minuta*	47	Jerdon's Bushlark	*Mirafra affinis*
18	Marsh Sandpiper	*Tringa stagnatilis*	48	Oriental Skylark	*Alauda gulgula*
19	Gull-billed Tern	*Gelochelidon nilotica*	49	Ashy Prinia	*Prinia socialis*
20	Whiskered Tern	*Chlidonias hybrida*	50	Plain Prinia	*Prinia inornata*
21	Common Tern	*Sterna hirundo*	51	Zitting Cisticola	*Cisticola juncidis*
22	Asian Openbill	*Eremopterix griseus*	52	Blyth's Reed Warbler	*Acrocephalus dumetorum*
23	Painted Stork	*Mycteria leucocephala*	53	Clamorous Reed Warbler	*Acrocephalus stentoreus*
24	Little Cormorant	*Microcarbo niger*	54	Red-vented Bulbul	*Pycnonotus cafer*
25	Great Cormorant	*Phalacrocorax carbo*	55	Common Myna	*Acridotheres tristis*
26	Spot-billed Pelican	*Pelecanus philippensis*	56	Indian Robin	*Saxicoloides fulicatus*
27	Grey Heron	*Ardea cinerea*	57	Pied Bushchat	*Saxicola caprata*
28	Purple Heron	*Ardea purpurea*	58	Purple Sunbird	*Cinnyris asiaticus*
29	Great Egret	*Ardea alba*	59	Western Yellow Wagtail	*Motacilla flava*
30	Little Egret	*Egretta garzetta*			

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Trip Report: Goa, September 10-12, 2022

Dr Jairamchander Pingle & Dr Rahul Lath

Lesser Adjutant (Photo: Dr Jairamchander Pingle)

Bird trip to Goa? Who goes to Goa for birding? 'Goa is all beaches and partying' is what most people believe. But Goa and the surrounding region is home to more than 400 bird species (resident and migratory). Some good birding spots in Goa are Bondla Wildlife Sanctuary, Bhagwan Mahaveer National Park, Salvador do Mundo wetlands, Salim Ali Bird Sanctuary (Chorao Island), Carambolim wetlands, Cotiago wetlands, Socorro plateau, Curtorim wetlands and Zuari River, to name a few.

We did a 3-day trip to Goa for birding and saw many birds including a few lifers which we will highlight in this article. Although it was the monsoon season with heavy rains predicted, we were lucky to get clear periods in between the rain showers. It was a challenge to keep our equipment dry and bird in the rain. Ponchos, umbrellas and rubber boots are a must for birding in the rain!

Day-1: Sept 10, 2022

We drove ourselves in a hired car and birded on our own. We covered the regions of Siolim wetland in North Goa, Socorro Plateau and the Salvador do Mundo wetland.

Brahminy Kite (Photo: Dr Rahul Lath)

White-cheeked Barbet (Photo: Dr Jairamchander Pingle)

The highlights of the day were Brahminy Kite, White-cheeked Barbet, Vigors's Sunbird and Black-hooded Oriole.

Black-hooded Oriole (Photo: Dr Rahul Lath)

Vigors's Sunbird (*Aethopyga vigorsii*), also known as the Sahyadari Sunbird or Western Crimson Sunbird, is a species of sunbird which is endemic to the Western Ghats of India. It has been considered as subspecies of the Crimson Sunbird. The male has a scarlet throat and breast, while the rest of its underparts are uniformly grey. Its wings are grey-brown and tail is green. In the females, the upper parts are dark olive while underparts are grey.

Day-2: Sept 11, 2022

We went with our birding guide by road to Bondla Wildlife Sanctuary, which is an hour's drive from North Goa. 50 bird species were observed by us over a 6-hour period. The lifers seen were the Vernal Hanging Parrot, Emerald Dove, Little Spiderhunter, Grey-fronted Green Pigeon, Fork-tailed Drongo Cuckoo, Bronzed Drongo and Bar-winged Flycatcher-shrike.

Little Spiderhunter (Photo: Dr Jairamchander Pingle)

Malabar Grey Hornbill (Photo: Dr Rahul Lath)

Other highlights were a large family of twelve Malabar Grey Hornbills, a pair of Malabar Pied Hornbills, and Greater and Black-rumped Flameback woodpeckers.

Black-rumped Flameback (Photo: Dr Jairamchander Pingle)

Greater Flameback (Photo: Dr Jairamchander Pingle)

We walked in the forest looking for the Blue-eared Kingfisher – it fishes in the streams in the forest covered by canopy, so that it is not disturbed by the sunlight reflecting on the water – but we were not lucky enough to see it. (Note: The Bondla Wildlife Sanctuary and surrounding forest is home to a variety of venomous snakes, and it is advisable to wear gumboots).

Grey-fronted Green Pigeon (Photo: Dr Rahul Lath)

The Grey-fronted Green Pigeon (*Treron affinis*) is found in the Western Ghats in India. It is usually seen singly or in small groups. The male has a reddish mantle while the female has a green mantle.

Vernal Hanging Parrot (Photo: Dr Rahul Lath)

The Vernal Hanging Parrot (*Loriculus vernalis*) is a small parrot which is resident in the Indian subcontinent and some areas of South-east Asia. It is a small, predominantly green, hanging parrot. It measures 14cm in length and has a small tail. The adult male has a red rump and bill and a blue throat patch, while the female has a green patch.

Malabar Pied Hornbill (Photo: Dr Rahul Lath)

The Malabar Pied Hornbill (*Anthracoceros coronatus*) is also known as the Lesser Pied Hornbill. At 65cm length, it has mainly black plumage with a white belly and throat patch. The bill is yellow with a large black casque. Females have white orbital skin which is lacking in the male. It is a common resident breeder in Western Ghats, Central and Eastern India and Sri Lanka.

The Bar-winged Flycatcher-shrike (*Hemipus picatus*) is found in the tropical forests of southern Asia. It is found hunting in the mid-canopy of forests and is insectivorous. It perches upright and has a distinctive pattern of black and white. It is black-capped, with black wings that contrast with the white body. A white slash across the wing stands out in contrast.

Bar-winged Flycatcher-shrike (Photo: Dr Rahul Lath)

The Little Spiderhunter (*Arachnothera longirostra*) is a species of long-billed nectar-feeding bird in the family Nectariniidae, found in the moist forests of South and South-east Asia. Unlike typical sunbirds, males and females are similar in plumage and are found near flowering plants.

Day-3: Sept 12, 2022

We took the early morning Ribandar Ferry on the Mandovi River and crossed over to the Chorao Island, which is home to the Salim Ali Bird Sanctuary. There we took a boat ride along the mangroves for about 90 minutes and saw 35 species of birds, including the Collared Kingfisher and the Stork-billed Kingfisher.

Collared Kingfisher (Photo: Dr Jairamchander Pingle)

Stork-billed Kingfisher (Photo: Dr Jairamchander Pingle)

Other birds seen were Rufous Woodpecker, Malabar and Chestnut-tailed Starlings, Lesser Whistling-duck, Common Sandpiper, Common Redshank, Striated Heron, Lesser Adjutant, Wire-tailed and Red-rumped Swallows, and Common Kingfisher.

Malabar Starling (Photo: Dr Jairamchander Pingle)

Striated Heron (Photo: Dr Jairamchander Pingle)

Malabar Giant Squirrel (Photo: Dr Jairamchander Pingle)

The full list of birds seen during the trip is given below:

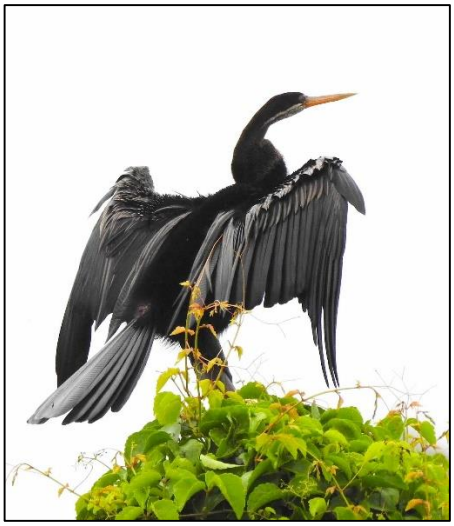
Sl No	Species Name	Scientific Name	Sl No	Species Name	Scientific Name
1	White-cheeked Barbet	*Psilopogon viridis*	39	Crested Honey-buzzard	*Pernis ptilorhynchus*
2	Brahminy Kite	*Haliastur indus*	40	Coppersmith Barbet	*Psilopogon haemacephalus*
3	Bronze-winged Jacana	*Metopidius indicus*	41	Brown-headed Barbet	*Megalaima zeylanica*
4	Darter	*Anhinga melanogaster*	42	Small Minivet	*Pericrocotus cinnamomeus*
5	White-throated Kingfisher	*Halcyon smyrnensis*	43	Large-billed Crow	*Corvus macrorhynchos*
6	Pale-billed Flowerpecker	*Dicaeum erythrorhynchos*	44	Indian Yellow Tit	*Machlolophus aplonotus*
7	White-bellied Drongo	*Dicrurus caerulescens*	45	Ashy Prinia	*Prinia socialis*
8	Red-whiskered Bulbul	*Pycnonotus jocosus*	46	Common Tailorbird	*Orthotomus sutorius*
9	Red-vented Bulbul	*Pycnonotus cafer*	47	Greater Flameback	*Chrysocolaptes guttacristatus*
10	White-rumped Shama	*Copsychus malabaricus*	48	Black-rumped Flameback	*Dinopium benghalense*
11	Green Bee-eater	*Merops orientalis*	49	Jungle Babbler	*Turdoides striata*
12	Vigors's Sunbird	*Aethopyga vigorsii*	50	Orange-headed Thrush	*Zoothera citrina*
13	Asian Koel	*Eudynamys scolopaceus*	51	Oriental Magpie Robin	*Copsychus saularis*
14	Indian Robin	*Saxicoloides fulicatus*	52	Purple-rumped Sunbird	*Leptocoma zeylonica*
15	Common Hawk Cuckoo	*Hierococcyx varius*	53	Crimson-backed Sunbird	*Leptocoma minima*
16	Grey-headed Swamphen	*Porphyrio poliocephalus*	54	Asian Fairy Bluebird	*Irena puella*
17	Black-hooded Oriole	*Oriolus xanthornus*	55	Little Spiderhunter	*Arachnothera longirostra*
18	Scaly-breasted Munia	*Lonchura punctulata*	56	Golden-fronted Leafbird	*Chloropsis aurifrons*
19	White-rumped Munia	*Lonchura striata*	57	White-browed Wagtail	*Motacilla maderaspatensis*
20	Red-rumped Swallow	*Cecropis daurica*	58	Rufous Woodpecker	*Micropternus brachyurus*
21	Vernal Hanging Parrot	*Loriculus vernalis*	59	Malabar Starling	*Sturnia blythii*
22	Asian Emerald Dove	*Chalcophaps indica*	60	Chestnut-tailed Starling	*Sturnia malabarica*
23	Blue Rock Pigeon (Feral)	*Columba livia*	61	Lesser Whistling-duck	*Dendrocygna javanica*
24	Little Swift	*Apus affinis*	62	Common Sandpiper	*Actitis hypoleucos*
25	Great Cormorant	*Phalacrocorax carbo*	63	Common Redshank	*Tringa totanus*
26	Little Cormorant	*Microcarbo niger*	64	Striated Heron	*Butorides striatus*
27	Great Egret	*Ardea alba*	65	Lesser Adjutant	*Leptoptilos javanicus*
28	Little Egret	*Egretta garzetta*	66	Asian Openbill	*Anastomus oscitans*
29	Indian Peafowl	*Pavo cristatus*	67	Grey Heron	*Ardea cinerea*
30	Spotted Dove	*Streptopelia chinensis*	68	Indian Pond Heron	*Ardeola grayii*
31	Grey-fronted Green Pigeon	*Treron affinis*	69	Purple Heron	*Ardea purpurea*
32	Fork-tailed Drongo Cuckoo	*Surniculus dicruroides*	70	Black Kite	*Milvus migrans*
33	Bronzed Drongo	*Dicrurus aeneus*	71	Blue-tailed Bee-eater	*Merops philippinus*
34	Bar-winged Flycatcher-shrike	*Hemipus picatus*	72	Wire-tailed Swallow	*Hirundo smithii*
35	Malabar Grey Hornbill	*Ocyceros griseus*	73	Common Kingfisher	*Alcedo atthis*
36	Malabar Pied Hornbill	*Anthracoceros coronatus*	74	Collared Kingfisher	*Todiramphus chloris*
37	Red Spurfowl	*Galloperdix spadicea*	75	Stork-billed Kingfisher	*Pelargopsis capensis*
38	Greater Coucal	*Centropus sinensis*	76	Rose-ringed Parakeet	*Psittacula krameri*

Some other photos taken during the trip:

White-rumped Munia (Photo: Dr Jairamchander Pingle)

Common Kingfisher (Photo: Dr Rahul Lath)

Crimson-backed Sunbird
(Photo: Dr Jairamchander Pingle)



Darter (Photo: Dr Rahul Lath)

Pale-billed Flowerpecker
(Photo: Dr Rahul Lath)

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Bird Humour

Umesh Mani

(Received on WhatsApp, June 19, 2021)

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Bird of the Month

Text and Photos: Umesh Mani

Painted Stork (*Mycteria leucocephala*)

Painted Stork adult (L) (Chennai, October 30, 2022) **and juvenile (R)** (Bharatpur, December 13, 2019)

Order: Ciconiiformes
Family: Ciconiidae
Genus: *Mycteria*
Species: *M. leucocephala*
Size: 93-100 cm

Description & distribution: A large, easily identifiable wader in the stork family, the Painted Stork has a heavy orange-yellow bill with a pinkish downcurved tip, bare orange head, waxy, unfeathered yellow face, and white neck and throat. The most distinctive feature is the bright pink-tipped tertial feathers, which also extend over the back and rump when at rest. Primary and secondary feathers, and the tail, are black with a glossy greenish sheen. It has a black breast-band with white scaly markings, running into the under-wing coverts, white belly and vent, and white back and upperparts. Legs are yellowish or reddish, but can appear white due to their tendency to defecate on their legs while standing. The sexes are alike, but the males are larger. Juvenile birds have a duller bill and brownish head and neck, and no pectoral band or pink feathers, giving the entire bird a brownish appearance.

The Painted Stork is widely distributed across the plains of Asia, south of the Himalayas and east of the Indus River system, extending east into South-east Asia, and including India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, Myanmar, South China, Indo-China and Sri Lanka. It is resident in most areas in its range, but can make seasonal movements. Young birds are known to disperse quite far (several hundred km) from their breeding sites.

Habitat & behaviour: The Painted Stork, usually seen in small groups, prefers shallow freshwater wetlands like lakes, but also frequents irrigation canals, flooded crop fields, tanks and village *jheels*, river banks and tidal creeks. It is absent from deserts, very dry regions and hilly areas. It has historically been rare in Kerala, though it appears to have expanded its range into Kerala in the late 1990s and is now seen regularly there. It is usually seen feeding in groups, foraging mainly in the day. It feeds mainly on small fish, though it is occasionally known to take crustaceans, frogs, eels or snakes. While foraging, it walks slowly, disturbing the water with its feet to flush the fish, and also senses them by touch while sweeping its half-open bill side to side as it walks. Once fed, it may stand still on the shore for long durations. Being a big bird, its flight is slow and ponderous, and it is often seen to take advantage of thermals as it soars along with Asian Openbills. The call is a harsh, croaking call.

Nesting: The Painted Stork nests mainly between August and January, shortly after the monsoons, with some variations based on local conditions. Painted Storks breed on large trees, either by themselves or along with other species like Asian Openbills, Black-headed Ibises, Spot-billed Pelicans, and assorted Egrets or Cormorants. The nest is a large stick platform with a shallow depression in the middle, lined with leaves and straw, built on trees standing near or in water, and include trees on islands. The usual clutch consists of 3-5 eggs, somewhat dirty white, with sparse brown streaks or spots; early breeders are known to have larger clutches. Incubation and feeding duties are done by both parents.

Local name: The Painted Stork is known as *'Janghil'* or *'Dokh'* in Hindi, *'Yeru kala konga'* in Telugu, *'Chenga narai'* or *'Sanguvalai narai'* in Tamil and *'Jhangil'*, *'Ram jhankar'* or *'Sona jangha'* in Bengali.

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